State of Louisiana
Department of Environmental Quality

November 15, 2002

M.J. "Mike" Foster
Governor

Contact Analisa Mir for more information: (225) 765-0731; e-mail: analisam@deq.state.la.us

L. Hall Bohlinger
Secretary

NEWS ALERT

COMMENTS SOUGHT ON IMPAIRED WATERS

Period Extended by Thirty Days

(Baton Rouge) -- The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is seeking to elevate the level of public involvement by encouraging interested parties throughout the state to provide comments on Louisiana's List of Impaired Waters. The list of impaired waterbodies, known as the Section 303(d) list, is a subset of a more comprehensive account named the Section 305(b) report, which is in fact a *Water Quality Inventory* prepared by DEQ every two years. This subset of the Section 305(b) report, or Section 303(d) list, has been up for public review since October 11, 2002. The comment period was scheduled to close on November 14, 2002. However, a 30-day extension has been granted beginning on November 15, 2002 and ending on December 16, 2002.

The 303(d) list specifically identifies waterbodies that are not meeting current water quality standards, and still require total maximum daily load (TMDL) development. Waterbodies that remain on the 303(d) list are those that are specifically targeted for TMDL development. A TMDL is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant a waterbody can receive while still meeting water quality standards.

The TMDL is a starting point for clean up. Implementation of a TMDL is a separate water quality management step. Per U.S. EPA guidance, once a TMDL is completed for a water body impairment, that impairment may be taken off the 303(d) list. However, the waterbody remains listed as impaired in the 305(b) report. As before, if all impairments have a TMDL completed, or all impairments are now meeting standards the waterbody can be removed from the 303(d) list. Other U.S. EPA guidance includes, but is not limited to, determining that all water quality standards related to the listed impairment are now being met as dictated by new water quality data, or determining that the impairment is caused by natural events unrelated to man-made factors.

Water bodies on the 303(d) list may be listed for one or multiple suspected impairments. Impairments for which a waterbody may be included in the 303(d) list include but are not limited to low dissolved oxygen, turbidity, and bacteria such as fecal coliform. Impairments are removed from the 303(d) listing for a waterbody when the impairment is found to be in

…/

compliance with water quality standards. If all impairments for a waterbody are found to be meeting standards then the entire waterbody is removed. In this sense, a waterbody can be listed as impaired for turbidity and bacteria. When turbidity meets the standard, that specific impairment is removed. However, the waterbody remains on the 303(d) list for bacteria. In removing a waterbody from the 303(d) list, DEQ follows U.S. EPA guidance.

The 2002 303(d) list was prepared using existing and readily available water quality related data and information in order to comply with rules and regulations of the Clean Water Act, as well as U.S. EPA guidance. As a result, the 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies has been narrowed from 1384 to 207. The final Section 303(d) List is available for public review in the Office of Environmental Assessment; Standards, Assessment and Nonpoint Source Section, on the 5th floor of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's headquarters located at 7290 Bluebonnet Boulevard, Baton Rouge. The report can also be viewed on the DEQ web site: http://www.deq.state.la.us/technology/tmdl/index.htm. Those unable to access the Website are encouraged to check with their local library for access. For information regarding the 2002 Section 303(d) List, contact Mr. Albert E. Hindrichs at 225-765-0246.

All interested persons are invited and encouraged to comment on the 2002 Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters. The Office of Environmental Assessment will address any questions and comments expressed during the 30-day review period and extension. Written comments should be addressed to Mr. Albert E. Hindrichs, Office of Environmental Assessment, Environmental Planning Division, P.O. Box 82178, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70884-2178.

-30-

(Attachments – Fact Sheets 3)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LOUISIANA'S WATER QUALITY INVENTORY AND LIST OF IMPAIRED WATERBODIES

THE FACTS BEHIND DEQ'S WATER MONITORING PROGRAM

Monitoring Approach

- Louisiana has been monitoring waters of the state since 1958.
- Water protection efforts in Louisiana include establishing specific water uses and criteria, and regular monitoring and assessment of the water quality.
- The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) uses U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) approved methods and guidelines for water quality monitoring, assessment, and reporting.
- In 1998, DEQ adopted a new system for water quality monitoring. Prior to 1998, DEQ sampled approximately 185 sites each month covering 70 to 80 state waterbodies. DEQ's new rotating basin monitoring system increased the number of ambient sites monitored from 185 to 640 across the state.
- The rotating basin ambient monitoring system for Louisiana divides the state's 12 basins into groups of two or three basins per monitoring year. Each grouping of basins contains an average of 95 watershed subsegments to be monitored each month of that monitoring year.
- The rotating basins approach reflects U.S. EPA guidance as one method of adequately monitoring state waters.
- Other states using the rotating basins approach include the neighboring states of Mississippi and Texas.
- Watersheds are areas where all connected waterbodies drain into the same river, bayou, lake, wetland, or estuary.
- A watershed can be as small as the drainage area around one small stream or as large as the portion of the United States drained by the Mississippi River.
- DEQ samples targeted waterbodies within the watersheds because they are representative of water quality in the area.
- While not every individual stream, lake, estuary, and wetland in Louisiana can be directly monitored by DEQ (there are over 10,000 named waterbodies in the state), virtually every watershed subsegment named in state regulations is monitored and assessed to determine if the subsegment is impaired or not.
- DEQ also monitors 21 long-term trend sites on 16 waterbodies. Long-term trend monitoring is conducted on a continuous monthly basis and is not subject to basin rotation.
- As of December 2002, nearly every waterbody subsegment for which DEQ maintains regulatory water quality criteria will have been sampled monthly for at least a one-year period.

Reporting Requirements

- Under the Clean Water Act, States are required to report to U.S. EPA, Congress, and the public "a description of the water quality of all navigable waters in such State during the preceding year."
- All states, including Louisiana, compile and present information pertaining to water quality in a report known as the *Section 305(b), Water Quality Inventory*.
- The 305(b) report is produced biennially and contains designated use support information for over 470 waterbody subsegments in the state, along with their suspected causes of impairment, if any.
- The four most recent 305(b) reports are posted on the DEQ website at: www.deq.state.la.us/planning/305b.
- The list of impaired waterbodies, known as the 303(d) list, is a subset of the 305 (b) report. The 303(d) list specifically identifies waterbodies that are not meeting current water quality standards **and will require development of total maximum daily loads (TMDLs).**
- Waterbodies for which TMDLs are completed but are still impaired and awaiting implementation plans are removed from the 303(d) list and placed on a separate impaired waters list also maintained as a subset of the Section 305(b) Water Quality Inventory report. This follows the U.S. EPA Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology (CALM) guidance.
- Waterbodies on the 303(d) list may be listed for one or multiple suspected impairments.
- Some of the most prominent water quality problems as indicated by monitoring and listed as waterbody impairments in the 305(b) report and on the 303(d) list include low dissolved oxygen, turbidity, and bacteria such as fecal coliform.
- An individual impairment to a waterbody with multiple impairments can be taken off the 303(d) list if the waterbody is found to be in compliance with water quality standards for that specific impairment. However, the waterbody may remain on the 303(d) list for impairment due to other pollutants.

Water Quality Management and TMDLs

- A TMDL is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant a waterbody can receive while still meeting water quality standards.
- TMDLs are useful tools for maintaining a successful water pollution control program and helping to assure that the designated uses for the waters of the state are protected and preserved.
- TMDLs are generally developed for the entire watershed, not just the waterbody subsegment identified in the 303(d) list.
- The TMDL is a starting point for cleanup. Implementation of a TMDL is a separate water quality management step.
- Upon completion of a TMDL, it becomes a part of the state's Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP).
- TMDLs are used to establish permit limits and reduction goals for nonpoint source pollution best management practices (BMPs).
- In the absence of a TMDL, waterbodies are still subject to water quality permitting, enforcement, and nonpoint source pollution control efforts to prevent or reduce pollutants in all waterbodies of the state.
- In 1997, DEQ hired additional field and technical personnel to speed up the process of TMDL development.
- Per U.S. EPA guidance, once a TMDL is completed for a waterbody that waterbody may be taken off the 303(d) list. However, the waterbody remains listed as impaired in the 305(b) report until water quality standards for that impairment are met.
- Other guidance for removing waterbody impairments from the 303(d) list includes:
    - DEQ and U.S. EPA determine that all water quality standards related to the listed impairment are now being met as determined by new water quality data.
    - DEQ and U.S. EPA determine that other types of water quality management efforts such as revised water quality permitting regulations, state led remediation efforts, the federal Superfund program, and efforts conducted by other state agencies or task forces are properly addressing the impairment.
    - DEQ and U.S. EPA determine that the impairment is caused by natural events unrelated to man-made factors.